

Distribution of Goods and Services

before, were nothing else but floundering. They have been endlessly going round in circle without solving the problem. On the contrary, they made things worse.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to make of it a political issue but only that we should ponder over it and ask my hon. colleagues in the house to consider the problem, to consider it in earnest for if they do not, one day the young people will no longer be satisfied with gathering at "Carrefour '69". They will have to blast up the whole system, to put there some kind of justice and equality for there will be no other answer.

When we have a percentage of 68 per cent of our Canadian workers earning less than \$4,000 a year and with more than 450,000 unemployed, we must, in all fairness, question ourselves and stop impeaching others with demagoguery, stupidity and so on.

[English]

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, we in this party do not share belief in the remedies which the party to our left puts forward as being all-corrective for the situation of poverty in Canada. However, we are grateful to the Ralliement Creditiste for having put this motion on the order paper today because it has forced the house to consider a situation which, in my view, is far more important than a number of other situations on which we have spent a lot of time this session. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of the house, the government has failed to take adequate measures in order to give Canadians the benefit of a policy of distribution of goods and services which would allow each citizen to obtain his share of Canadian abundance.

● (9:00 p.m.)

Because of committee work today, I found it necessary to miss most of the debate in the house. However, I have heard that statistics have been given by many speakers to show the extent of poverty in Canada. One such statistic has just been cited by my friend to the left. He pointed out that 68 per cent of Canadian workers receive less than \$3,000 a year, if I heard the figures correctly. This is about as damaging as any statistic that could be given. The Economic Council points out that one Canadian in five is living below the poverty line. I think it is time that we asked what poverty is in Canada today. Again, I believe the shortest and perhaps the most authoritative way to answer the question might be to quote the Fifth Annual Review of

[Mr. Fortin.]

the Economic Council. I shall read from page 104:

The problem of poverty in developed industrial societies is increasingly viewed not as a sheer lack of essentials to sustain life, but as an insufficient access to certain goods, services, and conditions of life which are available to everyone else and have come to be accepted as basic to a decent, minimum standard of living.

So, it is not whether a person is actually starving to death in the streets which determines whether he belongs in the poverty category. It is the fact that he is condemned, in a society in which we are able to produce a good standard of living for the normal citizen, to exist on a much lower standard. That is poverty in a modern, industrialized society. It is exceedingly widespread in Canada. If we do not do something about it, we will find ourselves in the same condition in which societies which are older and more developed than ours find themselves; that is, we will have many troubles and outbreaks because injustice simply cannot be tolerated longer by the people.

Poverty today is not what it used to be. A good many years ago poverty was limited to a very small proportion of the people. They were people who were unfortunate or in some way badly handicapped. Their problems were taken care of by charitable organizations and later on by government handouts of various kinds. I should like to point out, however, that poverty is not of that nature any more. Those of us who come from the large cities such as Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, and perhaps some not so large, know that there are large numbers of people of the third and fourth generation who have never known any other kind of life but poverty. If we look for the reason for the increase in delinquency and crime as the months and years go on, we will find it in these homes because they are the seed bed in which these things grow. When you find large numbers of people in the cities who are in this poverty situation, and have been for three or four generations, you begin to understand what the cancer is today that is spreading from generation to generation.

A child who has never experienced any life other than slum conditions is handicapped before he even leaves for his first experience at school. No amount of tender care, wise direction by the teachers, rehabilitation programs, head starts, or anything else in school will ever make up to him for those years which he spent in a slum environment. He can never overtake it. Now, we are beginning